

The Minstrel

Redeemer College's Poetry and Fiction Magazine

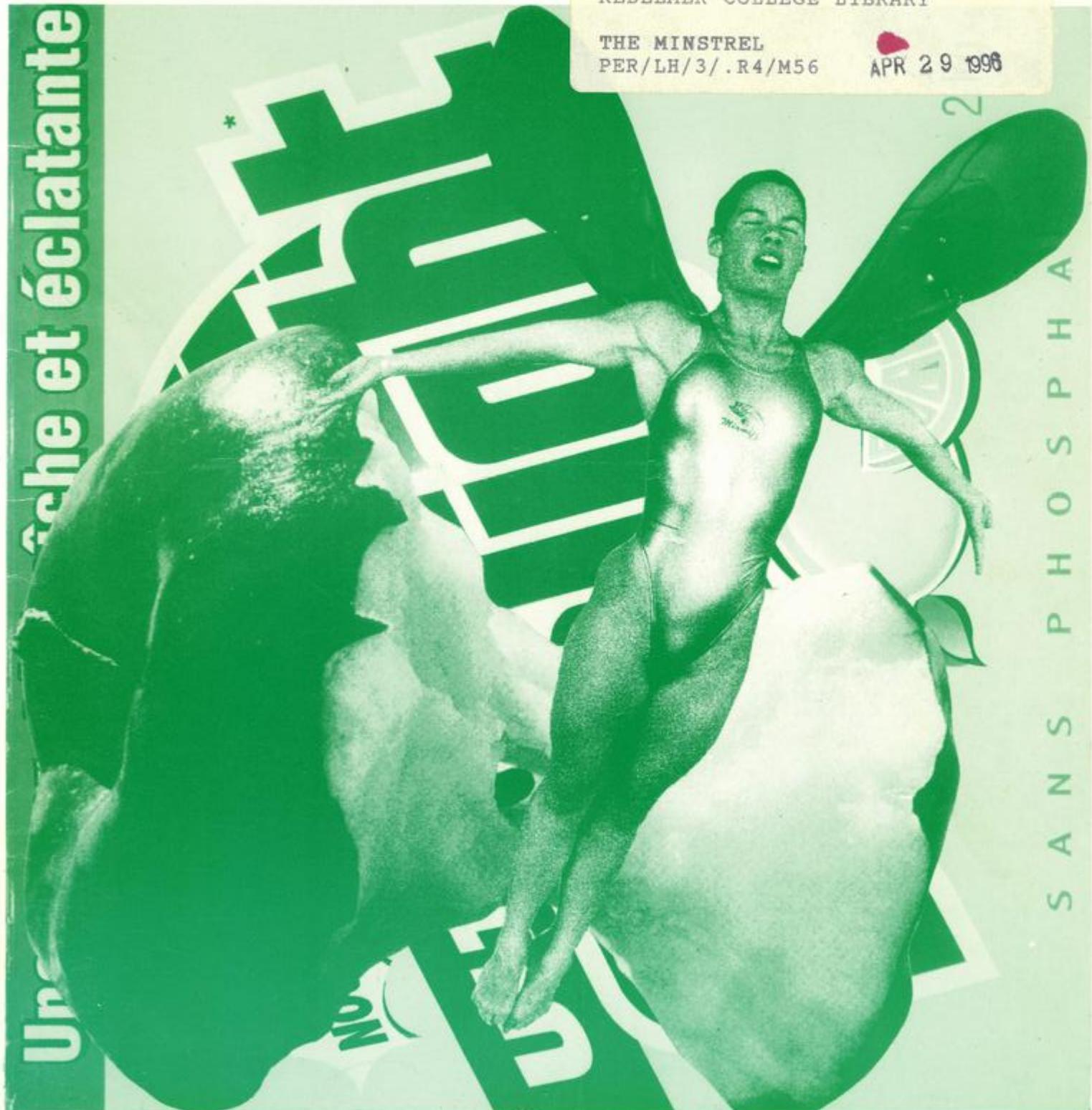
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Redeemer College's Poetry and Fiction Magazine
Volume 6, Spring 1996

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The Minstrel is published annually through funding by the Redeemer College Student Senate. It is written, edited and designed by students. Anyone who wishes to comment on *The Minstrel*, please speak to James de Boer or David Lehr. Anyone who is interested in the position of Assistant Editor for 1997, please speak to David Lehr.





Cover art: *Mina Loy's Angel*, by Andrea Vander Kooij

Last year's cover art was also by Andrea Vander Kooij. The editors of *The Minstrel* regret the omission.

Without a Map

All the time that I spend dreaming
could be the route
to the fulfillment of my
fantasies.

But the route in front of me is not
as clear as I would have hoped
and I am desperately
in need of a directing
map.

I just want to see the destinations to which
I need to go, see all
the turns
and stops
and dead-ends.

But maps are not quickly handed
out to dreamers. They are asked to take
each uncertain
step as it comes,
in faith.

—Diana Mostert

I realize change must happen,
but that doesn't mean i have to like it.

It's like a pair of jeans—
a new, uncomfortable pair of jeans.
Even though the old ones are full of holes,
i'd rather wear them. Less work, less hassle,
Less pain.
Old jeans fit.
You have to look long and hard to find
new ones that fit as good as the old ones,
and sometimes, you never find a pair quite
the same.

My life is a new pair of jeans
i'm having a hard time breaking in.
But every now and then, i must admit,
they look a whole lot better than the
old ones.

—Jeannette Sandink





“Lines”

I don't like it this way. I must confess
On a chalkboard. Noon hour damnation.
I had learned a lesson during recess,

Always writing the same lines, more or less:
*I will not use my imagination*¹
I don't like it this way, I must confess.

Follow logic and reason to success
(They say its a no-lose situation);
I had learned a lesson. During recess

I stood silent and watched the sky regress
Into particle classification
(I don't like it this way, I must confess)

And the rose became an organic mess
(Victim of scientific notation).
I had learned a lesson during recess.

I've grown, I've aged, and I proudly profess:
I will not use my imagination
(I don't like it this way, I must confess!)
I had learned a lesson during recess.

¹100X

—Keith Medenblik

Summer Recollections

The Time
Of Sand
Falls
Through Me As I
Feel Time
Slide Through my
Fingers
In An Attempt
To Preserve

Life

M. Scott Zylstra

Touchdown New Year's Day '96

Number fifty-five drops back to pass
The players live for the contact made
He tosses the ball toward the mass
Forty-eight receives and begins to raid
Thirteen red shirts rush for the man
But he makes the play and spikes the ball
He shows the world he's his biggest fan
And truly believes he will never fall
'Cause he scored a touchdown New Year's Day
His life will never be the same.
He definitely earned a raise in pay
And if he makes the two points they win the game

He spent the thirty-first asleep in bed
And with his wife and all his friends
Resting his bones for the big day ahead
And dreaming about losing those huge tightends
He just wants to be the hero
The man who brought his team from behind
He rose above the rest and beat the foe
And saved the team from a bind
'Cause he scored a touchdown New Year's Day
His life will never be the same.
He definitely earned a raise in pay
And if he makes the two points they win the game.

Ninety-six brings his bonus, parties and booze
He drinks all the time and loses his game
And after a party one day, he goes for a snooze
But he was in his car—there goes his fame
Arrested for driving while under the influence
He's off to jail to pay for his crime
He's a disgrace to his wife, friends and parents
And must sit and rot while doing his time
His mind goes back to the big play
He was king of the world, the best around
Everything was great, just a roll in the hay
And he didn't deserve to ever fall down
The papers report and the T.V. relates
The tragic event of the New Year's Man
His sad story must be nothing but fate
He's too weak to run, too feeble to stand.

When he gets out he has nowhere to go
When he gets out he has no one to see
When he gets out he has nowhere to stay
But he will still be remembered as the man
who scored the touchdown New Year's Day.

—Kevin VanGeel





Wintered Barns

Wintered barns
sway in littered yards,
silhouetted against
the darkening sky.
They lift up their silos
like tarnished trophies
won long ago in a fight
against the scorching sun
and incessant rain.
A short-lived victory.
And yet still there remains
a patched pride,
like the newly replaced planks
shimmering among the grey
and knowing on their north walls.
A pride in the passing of
yet another season and
in the silver crown
of wintering barns.

—Susanne Vanderkooy

paint me yellow

as the drops fall
so my countenance
no dismay here
what can I flaunt

my love for you
of brightest yellow
a colour not disagreeable
I would happily paint you

On my mind
as I reconsider
why yellow
I see blue as cold

draw me on your heart
draw me near
draw me big
draw me bold

bold yellow
more so than less
certainly flowing
crashing through uncertainty

—Tim Lyon

Hangin' Tree

Around me huddle the wooden cabins,
the bones of my past brothers, once part of a forest,
now only a line illuminated on the horizon
by the expected sun.

I stand in the city square,
a lone survivor, towering above the skeleton's smoking chimneys.
The people fear me and usually keep their distance.
But not today.

Even before the light they had gathered, whispering
below my spreading branches, in awe of my size.
A tall one with thin limbs walks about my girth
eyeing and testing nine of my lowest branches.

My largest arm, pointing west,
is chosen. A rope is tied to me, a bracelet. The people
shift to this side, careful not to trip on my roots
or disturb the soil that lies about my trunk.

The people hush and watch in admiration of me.
A bound and blinded one is brought forth.
The people's breaths fill the air and refresh my
sleepy leaves. The one is given to me.

The people cheer loudly with one last cleansing breath
of clear air. The sun peeks over the distant forest
touching my leaves with the new light. The people leave
my shadow one by one. The gift turns slowly on my arm.

It hangs in my shade. A sacrifice to nourish me
as penance for the death of my brothers. Soon only
a small one is left. He sits unmoving
on a large stump nearby. Then he goes back to the cabins.
I am left standing alone in the graveyard.

—John Lise

sweet water flows sour to me
beautiful flowers are ugly to see
but between
water and flowers is earth
that won't let either go.

—Jeannette Sandink





Prayer For Excuses

Yesterday I had hockey, today was basketball
I tried to find time but I figured I just couldn't
I knew I should have opened my Bible that day
But for some strange reason I knew that I wouldn't
I started thinking of excuses for acting that way
But none could be found, so I started to pray
Dear Lord please forgive me I know I was wrong
And I know what the problem was all along
I didn't make time for you these past days
Please lead me and guide me in all of your ways
Help me to make no excuse, but take time every day
So I'll never feel guilty with all I do and say.

—Sarah Allen
—Kevin VanGeel

He was there

He was there.
I saw him.

I was there,
Amid the lights,
The noise,
And amid the people.
And in the flickering strobe,
I saw a cross.
Briefly,
And then it was gone.

Was it a warning?
Were we not to be there?

Or rather,
Did He not come,
To bring redemption
To the lights,
To the noise,
And to the people?

—Jim Krale

Nature's Strength

The force of the water on hardened rock
wearing down its face to expose ancient
levels of sediment—perhaps once
cultivated and lived on by our ancestors.

The strength of the wind as it invades
the grasses of the field
blowing the petals off their blooms
no longer the floral bouquet they once were.

—Diana Mostert

Lament for the Jews

I.

step up Ude
to the left, follow the line
No! I said left
Hebe

walk this way Ude
damn you're ugly
want some water
Oops, sorry

crawl this way Ude
hey toothpick
here's some food
Shit, stepped on it

follow me Ude
a room for you
and 6,000,000 of your kind
Kyke

II.

Its their fault
Mien Fuhrer spoke of it
My problems are because of those
subhumans
Mien Fuhrer dictated no mercy
to those, those fucking Udes
I would have done it anyway
Heil Hitler
I felt warm watching them fry
Burn buggers! Burn
suckers





What was that? Did you lose your
dolly. Fuck off kid
Shut up, whore

All's fair in love and war
this is war, not love
I was only following orders
Idiots

III.

I gave the orders
It was the Udes
they robbed us
raped our pure women
those bastard rabbis, I'll get
every single one of them before I die
Survival of the fittest
we are fit, they are not

Sure it hurt to see them roast
but I was solving problems, not
causing them like the Udes

Heil Hitler
You there detain that fucker
Excuse me, I have to go
extract some information

No pain, no gain
who will suffer? Who will gain?

IV.

they took my father, early June, 1943
I was just a girl of eight
Mommy said he was on a business trip
My dad was a shopkeeper, we knew better

Mommy, I lost my dolly
I think that man with daddy has it
Mommy help me, he's hurting me
why is your shirt turning red? Mommy!

They made me a woman
I was nine
Don't touch me pig
thank God I blacked out then

The allies came today
Daddy should be home soon, I hope.
He didn't return

I am 48, those bastards
took my childhood and my
sanity

V.

The Germans were, are, wrong to try
The Germans could have succeeded
We were saved not by armies
We thanked ourselves
Remember the Jews, the ovens, the resistance
Remember Our Saviour
To forget is to condone
We protected them after
We were, are, in the wrong too

VI.

Look, look there's my boy, second row
He was in the army you know
I wasn't around Jews too much
but I knew Mein Fuhrer wouldn't lie
to us, we were his chosen people
I saw a rabbi
He was all thin and starved
no wonder Hitler wanted them gone
they didn't even feed themselves
A Jew was nice to me once, I think
it was a Jew, it was along time ago,
could have been yesterday

VII.

I was a lucky one
I survived
Every day I feared retribution
they came one day to my home
No charges, they just came. My wife was
alive. The suite was crowded. We all
didn't know a thing. Torture
isn't as bad as you might think
Our luxury coach to the winter
retreat was an open box car overflowing
with rank carcasses of men, or at least
at one point they were
The ride wasn't so bad if you
died on the way
I was a lucky one, I survived
The Krauts let me work for
freedom. It was simple,
move my future into burial
grounds, more like land fills





My number didn't come up
Remember them
Was I lucky I survived?

VIII.

Oh God of our Fathers why
hast thou forsaken us in our
hour of need?
I weep in love for You
Stop the stomping on our heads
Stop the midnight curses
Stop the murders
Lord, forgive them
I am a Jew, my son has been
taken to Auschwitz. Be near him
God of Jacob

They have put us in a ghetto
They beat me up and pissed on me
today. Heal me
The Nazis have taken our food
there is less food, we need heat
I feel... weak

at least it wasn't the ovens
for our rabbi

IX.

Come here my sons
Up the stairs
Through the gate
peace

Mosey here my daughters
Beautiful as you are
Eat well, love
utopia

Lie down dear
Replenish yourself
Here is some water
soothing

Descendants follow us
A place for you
And 6,000,000 more in
heaven

—Caleb de Boer

Necessity

we are free. We have
Freedom
our liberators, who
Brought it
dashed aside strife and
Starvation
soon and very soon sons
Of our
fathers will return with sound
Minds

—Caleb de Boer

B2

it looms up in the darkness
like a glint
and then is gone
but reflected in a mirror
behind you always
the white radiating warmth
of sparkles on the tinfoil
picking up the splinters
and waiting in the shadows

when you cry
the light is all around
when you want to be alone
the sense, like a serpent tight around you
 nothing destructive
 only the ebb and flow of confidence
no where else will you find
truly this I speak to thee
that gentle coaxing flitter of light

the dense beam spread wide
it hits everything
revelation is a skill
beholder is in my eyes
the beautiful
snares and clasps
harsh wires
lines of significance
all is after good all

—Tim Lyon





“White Stick”

And because, so long as he is in this mortal body, he is a stranger to God, he walks by faith, not by sight; and he therefore refers all peace, bodily or spiritual, or both, to that peace which mortal man has with the Immortal God...

St. Augustine of Hippo

I was walking down my street today. I
saw this man sitting on a bench alone.
He seemed to be watching the cars go by.
As I drew near, I saw a gaze of stone.
After I passed the man, I wondered why
he was smiling and what he might have known.
I glanced back and saw him crossing the street,
a white stick in his hand guiding his feet.

—Keith Medenblik

Thoughts for Thee

A madness dwells,
stirs in slumber.

A demon of day's night
laughing in hysteria.

Feeling of love?
Anger and delight?
Demons dancing bright.

I cannot stand
I cannot walk
For they invade,
my mind's thoughts.

Demons dance in me?
This they cannot be.

It not be anger and misery,
but only that, “I care for thee.”

—Kelvin Leggett

Between the Lines

ask not for whom the bell's tolling be
long time not it's been tolling for thee.
if you've ever wished that you were dead
the bell wishes it more than you've ever said
no hope, you're lost inside
you're not alone
others die,
inside you there's bloody tragedy
I know, it's been inside of me,

you're dead, the time has come for change,
take your heart, soul, mind, and rearrange.
turn yourself to something new,
take a stand on your point of view.
don't stop change in the act.
Let death happen don't overreact.
If you stop to see what you left behind,
you're stuck, livin' between the lines.

it's not the place to be my friend,
you'll lose it all in the end,
and though you'll scream and hurry on
you'll never see a new day dawn.
between the lines, stupid and cursed,
if you search for hope you'll find the worst.
darkness falls upon your broken heart,
resist the power, your soul be torn apart.

if you escape from between the lines,
lay down low, leave it all behind.
the pain will not begin to cease,
after what you went through there is no peace.
put it all inside, beside the black.
you want to believe in your lies
but the mirror reveals deceitful eyes

destroy the norm, lock it in a cage,
but you can't work against the rage.
the rage is like an ardent fire,
burning up your wont desire.
you've hesitated for far too long,
the resistance has grown twice as strong.
to pull out now is like death again,
you've forged your life within the pain.

remember this, what I said,
or you'll end up justly dead.
allow time to have its way,
changed, you'll live to see the day,
that your dying is over and you're alive,
fear will no longer be your drive.
remember, don't look at what's behind,
or you'll end up living, between the lines.

—Kai Groen





life

A whirlwind of joys and sorrows,
Of yesterdays, todays, and tomorrows,
It spins, and twists, and turns you
In a frenzy of thoughts and feelings
That you can never understand

A wistful breeze of love and sadness,
Of tears, and fears, and of gladness,
It carries, supports, and holds you
In a world of hurt and laughter

But you will make it through

—Sharon DeBoer

Acrobat

Is this my
cue to fall
down on my knees
and thank you?

Am I supposed
to hoard this
morsel of kindness
to prepare for
your winter?

I'm not an
acrobat that can
balance forever,
waiting for your
erratic April rains.

I need a safety net
to catch me
when you shake
the wire again.

And you can't
shake the wire
and hold the net
at the same time.

Don't you see that
your April rains turn
to ice when they
fall through the rays
of your winter sun?

—Susanne Vanderkooy

Tree Lines

I watch the
old tree lines
in all kinds of weather and
through all the seasons.

I watch the wind whip
the branches of the trees,
hear them snap;
the trunks groan as the roots
hold them firm.

I see the leaves spin wildly,
not knowing how much longer
they can keep their hold.

Sometimes one will
break off and the wind
carries it up and over
the treetops to fall on other ground.

—Diana Mostert

Granddaughter

The chill of the cold Monday morning, passing through both panes of the storm window, nipped her wrinkled skin. Ellen held her breath. Outside, under the window, lay a long, sculpted, white bank of snow. Past the snowbank lay piles of soiled snow recently pushed and piled up off the parking lot where it had softly fallen the night before. The leafless, white-tipped, maples' branches surrounded the parking lot in a scraggly circle. They left only a small space, where the drive was, for visitors to enter. The few cars in the lot now were only blotches, scattered about in a multicoloured pattern. As she watched, another blotch squeezed in through the maples.

It's not them, Ellen thought, not this early. She coughed, twice, lightly, her breath steaming on the pane. The lot quickly faded back and away. Ellen was left standing in her knitted slippers and brown flannel robe, staring at the glistening white slate of the window. She thought of taking another look, but her hand was still too cold from the first time cleaning the frost.

Ellen turned back to her old cherrywood rocker. Its back was covered with an orange and brown Afghan, and a small white doily sat on top of the headrest. Across the left armrest lay a half-knit, green sweater. Ellen, rubbing her veiny hands, moved slowly to the rocker. Steadying the right arm rest with her hands she carefully and skilfully sat down on the chair in one motion. The chair hardly moved.

Ellen placed the unfinished sweater in her lap, the knitting needles pointing out towards the corners of the small apartment. She leaned back, closed her eyes, and sighed. The ticking of her chime clock was all she could hear.

She remembered a time the needles had felt awkward in her hands. She had tried to make them work but the smoothness would not come. She had glanced over





at her Grandma whose needles clicked smoothly and had already seemed to produce a good two inches of a sock. Grandma would look up and smile. "Under, over and around," she would say, "Under, over and around, and hold the needles up more." She had moved her hands up the needles and held them so tight. She would try but the stitches kept falling off and she would soon have a small pile of knotted yarn on her lap. I'll never be as good as Grandma, she had thought. Grandma would look over at Ellen again, and shake her grey head. She would say, "Look Ellen don't get frustrated, it'll come with time. Just start off slow. Don't try and keep up with me, 'cause I've been at it over fifty years, you've just started."

Ellen had said, "Ok, Gramma." She had started knitting again, her hands working slowly; soon a few stitches had worked. Grandma smiled when Ellen finished her first line. But about halfway through her second line Ellen's hands cramped. She had frowned and put down the yarn and needles. She had then sat up on the couch and made as if to leave.

"Wait a moment," Grandma had said.

"But my hands are sore."

Grandma had frowned, "Ellen, why do you think I knit?"

"I don't know," Ellen had said shrugging her shoulders. Grandma had reached her hands out to Ellen's and Ellen had reluctantly placed her hands in her grandma's palms.

"To relax Ellen, it's a hobby for you to relax at. You just relax and knit and you can forget about your troubles for a while. The sweaters and socks are nice to have, but they aren't always the main reason I knit. So just relax, ok, and it'll come." Grandma had smiled again. Ellen had smiled back and sat up. She had picked her green socks up and started to knit, under, over and around, under, over and around.

Ellen's eyes opened and her head jerked up as she heard the hum of the Hoover vacuum starting up next door. Presentable, Ellen thought, I have to get this place in order. She looked around the room, then realized nothing had really moved from Saturday when the cleaning lady had been here to vacuum last. Ellen shook her head, she took the two ends of the knitting needles, and started to knit the sweater.

A while later the hum next door stopped. Ellen sat up and rubbed her cool hands. She heard the distant gurgle of running water from next door. Ellen knew the cleaning lady was done the vacuuming at Gerta's. She held the half-knit sweater up and sighed. In fifteen minutes the cleaning lady would be done and then she would come to see my room, she thought.

Ellen glanced up as the clock chimed once. Eleven thirty, she thought, as she rested the knitting needles and slid down in her chair.

"Grandma, Grandma!" Ellen remembered saying, "tell me another story 'bout when you were little, like when you beat up Josh Sovelle. You knocked him flat, right Grandma?"

Grandma had laughed. She had hugged Ellen then.

"You're a beautiful girl," Grandma had said.

"You're my best friend, Grandma," Ellen had smiled. "Now let's bake some brownies."

There was a knock on the door. Ellen awoke, pushed up on the handle of the rocker, and moved herself up and out, she mumbled, "Coming."

"How's everything here?" the cleaning lady asked.

"We're fine here." Usually Ellen would like to talk, but she knew the company should be coming soon. She smiled at the cleaning lady and closed the door letting

the knob softly click closed. She crossed the room back towards her chair near the window.

Ellen pressed her hand against the frosted pane, she pushed her fingers down, her knuckles turning white just before the wooden frame let out a little creak. Ellen pulled her hand back. She could see the lot again. It still looked the same as before, except now the dirty piles of snow had gathered small white patches of blown snow. The patches came together on the lee side of the banks and formed little tails, snaking out across the parking lot. The blotches parked in the lot were still the same.

* * * *

A knock brought Ellen back to reality. She set her knitting down and looked at the clock, it was four-thirty. It must be them, she thought. She raised herself out of her rocker and hobbled to the door. She grabbed the door handle and pulled it open in a quick jerky motion. There stood her blonde-haired son.

"My boy!" she said.

"Hi Mom," Frank answered, holding out his arms in the open door. He gave Ellen a big hug. Behind him stood Carol, a tall, well-dressed lady with a toothy smile. "Hello Mom," she said, moving in and giving Ellen a limp hug. To Carol's left was their six-year-old daughter. She stood in her big winter boots, long red coat with big black buttons, and oversized scarf hanging over her collar. Dirty blonde curls dropped over the scarf. She sniffled, wiped the wet patch under her nose and said, "Hi Gramma."

Ellen led them through the door and sat them down at the small circular dining table. Her granddaughter followed behind.

"Close the door, ok Julia?" said her mother.

Julia pulled the big door around and, standing on the toes of her boots, turned the knob. The door closed with a click.

Frank said, "Work is going well."

Ellen replied, "Umm, that's nice."

Her granddaughter sat down on the welcome mat, beside the shrinking stains caused by the dirty water from her parent's snowy shoes. She began to try to take one of her boots off.

Carol said something about work and then she launched into some excuse for why she was sick on Saturday. Ellen turned her head to look her in the eye. Carol just swallowed and flashed one of her big toothy smiles before looking away.

Julia succeeded in getting her first boot off. But at the same time she seemed to have lost her sock. She lifted the boot up and started to search for the sock. She reached her arm in, brows furrowed, and shook the large boot a little. Then she stopped for a second, a smile crossing her face. From about elbow deep into the boot she pulled out a little pink sock. She sniffled, dropped the boot, and wiped her red sleeve across her nose. She sighed and set the sock down beside the tipped boot. She then went to work on the other boot. By the time the second boot was off her cheeks were a deep blush. She turned onto her knees and began to unbutton her red coat.

There was a lull in the conversation. Ellen turned her attention to Julia.

"Julia, maybe next time you have to take off this much winter clothes, you should take off your coat first. You look a bit warm."

Ellen motioned for her to come over to the table. Julia stood up slowly, her coat had only one button undone. She walked over to her Grandma. Ellen carefully





undid each remaining black button slowly, instructing Julia as she did so. Ellen left the last button for Julia.

"Julia, you try. Undo it just like how I did it."

Julia's small fingers worked the button open and she dropped her coat to the floor.

"Now my scarf," she said.

Ellen placed her hand on Julia's shoulder and gently gave her a half turn. She proceeded to undo the double knotted scarf.

"Thank-you Gramma," said Julia.

As soon as the scarf was off, Julia ran away, running circles around the small room, flapping her shirt up and down in an attempt to cool off.

"Ok Julia," smiled Carol, "Careful you don't break any of Grandma's things."

Ellen thought the conversation for the next half-hour went well, even though she didn't speak much. Her son and daughter-in-law talked about the rest of the family, sales in the mall, and how Julia was handling school while they were away at work every day. Ellen mostly nodded and agreed a lot, but the whole time she kept her eyes on Julia.

Julia seemed an imaginative child. She would make believe Gramma's clean carpet was her own little house, and that she was cooking and cleaning all by herself. The rocker was an oven and she walked up to it to put some cookies in. But before the cookies were all the way into the oven she stopped and dropped the tray.

"Gramma, what happened to this sweater?" Julia held up the half-knit sweater. "There's big pins in it."

"Oh Julia," said Carol, "Try not to break any of Grandma's things, dear."

Ellen laughed, "No, Julia, it's not finished yet, Grandma's making it still."

Julia's eye's looked down at the sweater and then back up to her Grandma. She smiled. "How Gramma?"

"Well come here and I'll show..."

"Julia," Carol said frowning, "Put down those needles dear, you could poke out an eye."

Ellen looked at Julia. Julia's wide blue eyes looked back. She stepped forward.

"Julia!" said Carol.

Ellen held her pale palms out towards Julia.

Julia smiled and held out her small, warm hands.

Carol stepped around the table and scooped Julia up and dumped the knitting back on the rocker.

"When I say no..." She whirled around and walked over to the door with Julia under her arm. "Honey, it's time to go now, Julia's getting tired."

Frank looked at Ellen, he blew his bangs above his eyes so they lifted slightly off his brow. He shrugged and got up to give his Mom a goodbye hug.

"See you in a few weeks, Mom." Frank hugged her and helped his wife carry the half-dressed Julia out.

Ellen placed both of her hands on the window, then watched her son walk his family to the car. They walked lightly on the icy walk, seeming to bear less weight than when they had walked in. Julia ran ahead and jumped on the now white banks surrounding the lot. She knelt down, picked up a clump of snow and started to suck on it. Then she turned and hurried to catch up to her parents leaving a dirty patch of snow exposed on the side of the bank.

Ellen left the window, slowly rubbing her hands. She sat down hard onto the chair; it caught her and rocked her forward and back. She picked up her needles and began to knit. The small clock chimed the hour. The needles felt smooth. She stopped knitting, leaned back, and closed her moistening eyes as she listened to the ticking of the clock

—John Lise

Youth Relived?

A youth danced with dazzling delight
living life in night's neon lights.
Emotions waged—surged with fright
forgetting all taught that was right.

Deep down in his abyssal realms
were the rules of societal qualms.
Of this he paid nor wrong and right
viewed the world in a naive sight.

In his wake the years did dance,
this mortal youth it did entrance.
Age caught up—it took its right
a maniacal youth felt its bite.

A new man awoke with a silent sigh
not knowing whether to live or die.
“Has life turned into this mortal race,
to have it all is to win the chase.”

“Is all of life to read and write,
glowing in one's learned light.”
In his place—aged and aware
of bleak truths—cold with despair.

“Will I try my youth to retrace?
Forgetting life's learned pace.
In what can I find to embrace?
I will forget life's lurid race.”

Life's stolid stage to him did invite
he want it not—not care of his plight.
Dark voices did arise, telling societal lies
He believed them all—with blinded eyes.

Voces peaked—talking to him all day
in a catatonic trance would he stay.
He thought by chance he could be
immortal to ancient death's decrees.

Of all he had much could he give—
the thing he want was youth relived.
This dream of his perished in reality,
in books and brains are immortality.

—Kelvin Leggett





Eternal Damnation

Sometimes I wish that I was free,
to explore the beauty of the night.
These walls are closing in on me.

Yet even at day I cannot see,
For my eyes have been robbed of all their sight,
sometimes I wish that I was free.

To pursue a desired fantasy,
and when I feel that I just might;
These walls keep closing in on me.

But my heart is cold, and will always be,
searching for that elusive light.
Sometimes I wish that I was free.

These prison walls hold all tyranny,
it is useless to even try to fight.
These walls are closing in on me.

I know I shall pass into obscurity,
Yet I bid farewell to thee tonight.
Sometimes I wish that I was free,
but these walls are closing in on me.

—Jack Klooster

Dawn

Each morning I awake before the break of day.
Before the morning sunlight chases away the blackness of night.
Lying in my bed I watch as the dresser, tv, and lamp take form
And emerge out of the shadows of darkness.
I am overcome by this experience every day.
Each day, I awake with anticipation.
I expect to pinpoint the exact second that my room is transformed.
Every day, I am disappointed because the change is so gradual.
At this point, I feel a gentle tapping inside my chest.
I ask myself if this tapping is coming from inside of me.
Or is there a gentle yet powerful force that enters my room each day
And is knocking at the outside of my heart.
I am reminded of a picture I once saw
Of a beautiful man clothed in a white gown.
He was surrounded by a glowing light and knocking on a door.
I can't help wondering if what I feel is him
Knocking on the outside of my heart trying to get me to let him in.
As the mornings come and go, my desire to perceive with certainty
Where this knocking or tapping is coming from grows stronger.
But in the confusion of the dawning,
I am unable to distinguish the truth.

—Christie Mulder

Royal Court

You wear the crown I made for you, and there
Upon your head it rests, a golden star
Whose gleaming rays surround kingdoms afar.
I gave the purple, jewelled robes you bear,
That radiate your glory everywhere.
The sight of you evokes spectacular
Images; a star-filled sky no Sun can mar—
This, by your hallowed name, your subjects swear,

But I have seen you, Queen, without your gowns.
I wanted you to share with me the court
I raised for you. That dream has come to pass,
But I sit alone; I'm your jester clown.
You laugh; I bend and give without retort,
Still you want me to kiss your royal ass.

—Keith Medenblik

The Joys of Childbirth

Hard and warm
lifeless and docile
barren and waste
smooth and damp

cry

slippery as waxy oil
small as a pillow
loud as death
alive as granite

cry

No! don't bore into it
don't poke or prod it
cradle it
hold it to my bosom

we cry

"Please let it go
Give it to me ma'am"
What could I do
My lump was mine

run

What am I doing
Get it off me!
Get it off
Wait a few minutes





cry

Here, I release it
Please no initials tagged
on to it
drop the jackhammer

cry

I have lost another
We cannot get it right
I want rock to become
life not lifeless

we cry

too many tears
covered face again
let me out of here
move out of my way

run

Caleb de Boer

Small one, you can't yet understand my words,
but I want you to listen well to me.
I won't speak of what I hope you will be
(Although I hope for many and great things);
but of my hopes for what I will be for you.
Gentle and strong—I want to support you
when you might fall, guide when you might
stumble, and stand aside to let you walk.
A speaker and a listener—to speak
so you will hear, and listen when you speak,
so learning will be exploring, and the guide
can be a friend. Holding you now, you look
so innocent and helpless. My life's work
will be to guide you to wisdom and strength,
knowing good from evil, striving for good.
No matter what you do, I will love you.
My heart is heavy with thoughts of its faults;
I pray for you to be shielded from them.
My heart is made glad with joy for your life;
I pray that you are given equal joy.
If all these things I am able to do,
I will know that I have been the kind of
parent to you, as mine have been for me.
And for me, that knowledge will be enough.

—James de Boer

Shoeshine Joe

"Shine your shoes? Best polish in the city!" Joe called out to the passers-by.
"All right, but make it quick."

The young man sat down and put his feet on the footrest. He opened his briefcase on his lap, took out the financial paper, closed the briefcase, put it on the ground, and turned to the stock pages.

Joe slid his wooden box from beneath the stool and took out his tin of black polish and his black cloth. He opened the tin and wiped some polish onto the rag.

"Fine shoes, sir."

"Uh huh."

Joe rubbed the polish evenly over the shoes, being careful not to get any on the socks or laces.

"Beautiful day today, isn't it," Joe said as he put the rag and polish away and took out another cloth.

"Yeah." The young man turned a page.

Joe wiped off the excess polish, then took out his brush. The bristles were real horsehair, which was more expensive, but Joe couldn't get used to the way the artificial bristles felt when he buffed. They sounded different, too. Joe liked the soft, scratchy, rubbing sound that horsehair made.

"Glad it's spring, I was sure getting sick of snow," Joe said as began to buff the shoe. Back and forth back and forth.

"Me too. Hate the rain, though."

Back and forth back and forth.

"April showers bring May flowers."

"Uh huh." The page turned again.

Back and forth back and forth.

When the shoes gleamed just so, Joe put the brush back in its spot in the box and took out his polishing cloth. Joe knelt over the shoes with the cloth. He drew the cloth back and forth, quickly but lightly.

Back and forth back and forth back and forth. Heel first, then sides, then toe.

"You almost done?" The stock pages lowered.

"Yes sir, I'm just finishing polishing now."

"All right." The stock pages went back up.

Back and forth back and forth. Missed a spot. Back and forth. When Joe was finally satisfied that the shoes looked like Italian leather he said, "All done sir, better than new."

"Thanks."

Joe took the money that was handed to him. Not too bad, two bucks tip.

"Thank you, sir. Have a good afternoon."

The stock pages went into the briefcase, two neat clicks, and two lovingly polished shoes walked down the sidewalk, carrying their owner back to his office where stocks were so important. I hope his stocks do well, Joe thought as he watched the young man walk down the street. He turned, knelt, folded his polishing rag and put it back in his box.

"I brought you a sandwich!"

"Amanda?" Joe said as he turned and stood up.

"Of course. I brought your favourite. Peanut butter and bananas!" Amanda pulled a plastic sandwich bag from her knapsack. In the bag was a somewhat





squished sandwich. Peanut butter and banana was Amanda's favourite sandwich; Joe took the bag from her, opened the bag, took the sandwich out, and took a large bite.

Joe smiled after he managed to swallow. "Thank-you, tickle-brain, but aren't you supposed to be in school?"

"Dad, you know it's spring break. I don't have to go to school today. Or tomorrow. Not for all of this week. Mrs. Simpson says that we have to go see our Mom or Dad at work, and we have to write about what they do for a job. Since Mom's always going to other ladies' houses and doing their make-up, I can't go along. Besides, I like polishing shoes."

Amanda hopped onto the chair and put her feet on the footrests, "Do mine, please."

"Amanda, are those your Sunday shoes?"

"Yes."

"Should you be wearing them when it's not Sunday?"

"No, but I like it when you polish my shoes, and you can't polish my running shoes, so just this once, please?"

"All right. But don't you get them muddy on the way home."

"I won't, I promise, Dad, I'll be very careful."

"Ok."

Joe pulled his box from beneath the stool and opened it.

"First we put the polish on." Joe carefully spread polish on the shoes.

"Then we wipe off the extra." Joe used the second cloth to take the excess polish off the small little shoes on the footrest.

"Then we brush them. We have to make sure every part of the shoe is brushed. Nothing worse than a badly polished shoe." Joe burnished Amanda's shoes.

"I like the sound the brush makes, Dad."

"Me, too. Now for the fun part. The final polish. Make the shoes shine like the sun! If you can't see your face in the toes, they're not polished enough!" Joe quickly ran the polishing cloth across the shoes; up and down back and forth up and down. In fact, they could not see their faces in the toes. But the shoes *were* well polished.

"Thank-you." Amanda bounced off the chair and kissed Joe on the cheek.
"Let's go have lunch."

"Amanda, I can't leave this stuff here. Someone might take it."

"Oh. Well, let's eat here then."

"Ok." Joe went to sit on his stool.

"No, you sit in the chair, and I'll polish your shoes."

"It's ok. Sit and eat with me."

"Dad, I *want* to. Please?"

"All right. But remember what I taught you, ok?"

"Sure thing. No polish on the socks or laces. No extra polish. See your face in the toes."

"Ok, I guess you're ready." Joe put his feet on the footrest.

Amanda took the box from beneath the stool and set to work. She took out the polish and the rag to apply it. "Polish around and around. Wipe off extra." She took out the brush and ran it across the shoes. "Brush quickly but gently." Amanda watched the bristles jump back and forth as she skimmed the brush across her father's shoes. She took out the polishing cloth. "Polish until they shine like the sun."

She did a pretty good job, Joe thought. A little polish on his socks, but the toes were shiny.

"There you go, better than new."

"And for you . . ." Joe reached into his jacket and pulled out the chocolate bar that he had been saving for the bus ride home at the end of the day.

"Thanks!" Amanda tore the wrapper open and began eating the chocolate bar in little nibbles.

"Are you a mouse?" Joe asked, smiling.

"It makes it last longer."

"That makes sense."

Joe and Amanda sat in silence for a few minutes. She nibbled, and he chewed on the peanut butter and banana sandwich. They finished eating, but stayed silent, watching people go by. Amanda broke the silence.

"People don't take very good care of their shoes, do they, Dad?"

"No, most don't."

"But you make them better don't you? 'Better than new,' right?"

Joe smiled and said, "I try. It's important to have well-polished shoes."

"You're the best the shoe-guy I know."

Joe was sure that Amanda didn't know too many other "shoe-guys." "Thank-you."

They sat silently for a while, and continued to look at the different people going by. Then Amanda stood up.

"I'm going to the park now, Dad."

"Be careful on the bus, sweetheart."

"Yes, Dad. I love you."

"I love you, too."

Amanda started to walk down the street, then she ran back. "I almost forgot. I drew a picture for you." She pulled a folded and crumpled piece of paper from her knapsack, handed it to Joe, kissed him on the check, then ran down the street and around the corner towards the bus stop.

Joe opened the piece of paper and carefully smoothed out the wrinkles. It was a drawing of a man and a girl. Both were wearing black shoes. On the toes of the shoes, Amanda had drawn faces; and yellow sun-lines came out of the shoes. Joe carefully folded the paper up and put it in his box. He put the box under his stool.

"Shine your shoes? Best polish in the city!" Joe called out to the passersby.

—James de Boer





Autumn Wind

(after Coleridge)

You want to go indoors. Well.
The rushing wind gives a stiff blush
to your cheeks which tuck so timidly
into the fringe of your hood that I think
you are scared of what has passed
between us today. Autumn has just begun,
and though most jarring now, soon
even this bent and huddled corpse
of a tree will shrug away its warmth
and lean, head bowed into the gale,
penitent and remorseful in the pained
knowledge that its limbs do little good
to stay the raging swells, a rough drift
of snow and leaves settled in the spot
where we now sit.

Another gust,
and the words click and startle
from your crisp jaw. But hold!
the walk home is colder still, and I—
No. Let us stand and brace ourselves
for the walk, for the few spare steps which
remain. They are lodged in my throat
like ice, and only the wind can pry them out;
once inside, insulated, they will spill
in shallow puddles across the floor, and
evaporate in thin and wispy steams
of sad silence. And once insulated
from the harsh gusts of my speech,
you also will melt, pour into a chair
with the absent and indifferent
flow of a stream's quick current,
running swiftly away, always further away;
and an air of dreams, glowing rosy
on your cheeks, will envelop you like
summer's haze of heat. What has passed
between us today (and all the days alike)
will float like dead leaves and rotten
twigs on that stream's surface, and be
forgotten.

But here is the door. I have
said nothing, though great wind has
passed between us today, whirl of leaf-
falls and earth's last flower also;
but more importantly, sitting in that hollow

cove of dead branch, a numbing chill
at which you shudder and tense, and
of which you seem so afraid. Still.
Nature, this ice-land of white and grey
where the wind speaks the loudest word,
crystallizes each of us to another. I turn away
from the closed door, turning stiff
into the coming freeze, and stand alone
now, in rigid fear of silent summer.

—David Lehr

David at the Harp

Watch the veiled women tuck and twirl
To the silver swirling tune
My strings of wound and weathered sheepskin
Make in the space of this cavernous hall;

My spirit swells beyond its troubled fence,
Like rampant stallions, when this music
Breathes its odour, as of Eastern musk
And incense, on their bodies as they dance

And start the lusty hearts of Saul's men,
Reclining on their cushioned seats,
Tearing at the spread of bloody meats,
Sipping from their flasks a foreign wine.

The king himself basks in brazen gear
On his polished throne, refreshed and calm,
A high-wrought spear ready at his arm
While a maiden leans, her tongue in his ear.

From time to time he blinks and stares
With vague and darkened eyes at me;
I play on, but the notes fall flatly
Through the air. The hall is full of fears,

Cautious movements, the slight recoil
Of the maiden's urgent touch, the cough
To cover up a wistful joke or laugh
At Saul's expense, but most unsure of all





The sweeping of these strings to make a lame
Note walk. It jars the scented air.
The dancers improvise with graceful care,
While Saul starts up, blinking in quick time.

What reward for my duties to the throne?
I have my tens of thousands, my success;
When all of Israel was frozen with distress
Beneath the giant, I saved it with a stone.

And what reward? Jealousy, hatred, rage
Pierce my weary heart, snap my strings.
On one occasion, in the midst of songs,
He heaved a javelin for my wage.

I miss the grazing fields of Bethlehem,
The smooth rock on which I would recline
Watching the slow sheep sleep and dine
To the purest psalms my hand could strum.

O, the music flowed from me like milk
And honey, sweet and smooth; my words
In praise of God fit the perfect chords,
A peaceful harmony, rich as silk.

But here I am, summoned from my youth
To soothe the fury of this king,
Whose venomous serpent's tongue
Licks away the bear's and lion's wrath

Which I withstood when it bore me down
And pawed my father's flocks.
The madness barking in this maniac's
Brain sets my gentle melodies on the run.

My fingers bleed, the notes choke and whine.
My heart's not in it. This court's grand song
Falters in the presence of the king
Who seems to sense, in my face, a sign

Of angelic music, of trumpets from clouds
Calling all the world to roar
With joy, of salvation swift and pure.
But in my face, only a song resides.

—David Lehr

